

Cabinet	Ref No: CAB06 (2020/21)
21 July 2020	Key Decision: Yes
Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030	Part I
Report by Executive Director Place Services and Director of Environment and Public Protection	Electoral Divisions: All

Summary

The County Council adopted a [Notice of Motion](#) on climate change in 2019, calling on West Sussex County Council to show leadership, step up the work of the Council to combat climate change, and attempt to make West Sussex County Council carbon neutral by 2030.

To support the Cabinet Member, a Climate Change Advisory Group was formed. The Climate Change Strategy sets out the County Council's ambitions and commitments needed to deliver them.

Informal engagement was undertaken with partner organisations and elected Members through June 2020. The results, as well as any recommendations made by the Environment and Communities Select Committee held on 24 June, have been considered before the Cabinet considers the adoption of the strategy.

West Sussex Plan: Policy Impact and Context

The commitments in the Strategy align to the five priorities in the current West Sussex Plan (to 2022). It demonstrates how we can lead, enable and inspire our organisation and our communities to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by our changing climate.

Financial Impact

There are no specific financial implications identified in the Climate Change Strategy although there will be opportunities for investment and savings arising from the action planning and project delivery work to follow. Any financial implications must be considered in the light of the ongoing difficult financial circumstances facing this and all councils, exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's budget and the wider economy, and will be considered alongside other capital programme priorities during the budget process. The Strategy itself therefore does not call for any specific funding to be allocated at this stage.

Recommendation

That the Cabinet adopts the Climate Change Strategy 2020 – 2030, attached as Appendix A.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 is the UK's long-term framework for tackling Climate Change. In 2019 the Government amended the goals within this Act and committed the UK to achieving "net zero" greenhouse gases by 2050.
- 1.2 The Act established the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) which advises the UK on preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- 1.3 In April 2019, the County Council unanimously adopted a Notice of Motion on Climate Change. At the request of the Cabinet Member for the Environment, the Climate Change Advisory Group (CCAG) was set up to advise on the preparation of a strategy to deliver action on climate change and to meet the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 1.4 CCAG membership is cross-party, with two members of the Youth Cabinet and invited external representatives from the South East Climate Alliance (SECA).
- 1.5 CCAG has met quarterly since July 2019. CCAG has advised on the content, ambition and language contained within the Strategy. There are three members of the Conservative Group, one of the Liberal Democrat Group and one of the Labour Group.

2. Proposal Details

- 2.1 The draft Strategy is attached in Appendix A. It sets out a vision that in 2030, West Sussex County Council is carbon neutral and climate resilient, using our limited resources wisely. West Sussex County Council has enabled positive actions and behaviours across our county to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 2.2 The Strategy notes that mitigating and adapting to climate change can have many benefits, but in particular our communities will see:
 - In Increased health and well-being
 - Improved air quality
 - A protected natural environment and supported biodiversity
 - A greater and greener local economy
 - Reduced bills and
 - Energy security
- 2.3 Among the benefits of adopting this strategy for the County Council are:
 - Achieve strategic objectives
 - Reduced financial costs
 - Reduced impacts on service demand and delivery

- 2.4. The Strategy sets out five commitments, each with a series of clear ambitions:
- mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing carbon emissions
 - adapt and be resilient to a changing climate
 - source and use resources sustainably
 - support and grow our local green economy
 - transform how we work
- 2.5. To have the maximum impact possible with this strategy, there is not a focus on narrow specific issues, but instead a framework which will shape and influence every part of business.
- 2.6. It gives everyone working at, and with, the County Council a very clear indication of our priorities. It does not make promises or commitments on behalf of partner organisations.
- 2.7. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has shown as an organisation and society we can swiftly adapt to an unexpected situation. Adopting new behaviours and ways of working, this resilience and adaptability are great strengths which can support the response to Climate Change.

Factors taken into account

3. Consultation

3.1 Climate Change Advisory Group

The CCAG has shaped and guided the development of the Strategy and Carbon Management Plan. A recent communication from the SECA stated '*Your inclusion of Geoff Barnard and Tony Whitbread from SECA on the WSCC Climate Advisory Board has been pioneering - we are aware of only 2 or 3 councils in the region where this sort of relationship has been formalised'*

3.2 Technical experts

Officers were engaged early, and then through focus groups and a survey. Their feedback focussed the remit of the Strategy, confirmed what was within the Council's ability to deliver and framed a clear policy steer.

3.3 External informal engagement with partners

Informal engagement with key partners took place through June. An early discussion with the national Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP) Secretariat highlighted that '*there is potential for WSCC to be a trailblazer with joint resilience and net zero approach*'. The Strategy was circulated to the South Downs National Park, West Sussex District and Boroughs, Local Economic Partnership, the NHS, Sussex Wildlife Trust, East Sussex County Council (on behalf of the Local Nature Partnership), Hampshire County Council, the LAAP and SECA Steering Board. A summary of the feedback received is in Appendix B.

3.4 Engagement with elected Members

This took place in June, via an online survey, sent to all members. A summary of the feedback received is in Appendix B. The Strategy was taken to Scrutiny on 24th June, where members welcomed the direction and content of the Strategy as providing a solid foundation for this work.

Members were keen to see a commitment to community engagement and support. The intention to work with communities is already clearly stated in the Strategy (2nd and 3rd opportunities, p8), highlighting the need to consider different ways to achieve this. Actions have been placed in the draft Delivery Plan.

Members highlighted the importance of the planning function, with a request to lobby Government around development in flood plains. Lobbying has been placed in the draft Delivery Plan.

Members were pleased to learn that the Climate Change Board had been set up to oversee delivery of the Strategy.

The Committee requested that the Delivery Plan be brought to them for Scrutiny, and that public engagement on the proposed actions is enabled.

3.5 External consultation

The timeline for this strategy has been accelerated to align and integrate the commitments and use this unmissable opportunity presented by the recovery planning from Covid-19. Engagement with communities will be considered once the strategic direction of the Strategy has been endorsed, with a view to shaping the actions contained within the Delivery Plan.

3.6 Best practice

In developing the Strategy, relevant best practice was considered – Natural Capital Committee – [Nature Based Interventions](#) the [LNP Natural Capital Investment Strategy](#), the [Friends of the Earth Climate Action Plan](#) and the [LAAP Adept Adaptation report](#).

- 3.7 The CCC recently set out [six key principles](#) to rebuild the nation following the Covid-19 pandemic whilst delivering a stronger, cleaner and more resilient economy. With the County Council currently preparing a recovery plan, it is critical that the principles in the proposed strategy are embedded within.

4. Financial (revenue and capital) and Resource Implications

- 4.1 The adoption of the Strategy will have no cost implications to the County Council. The resources to implement the strategy will be identified through the creation of a Delivery Plan, and specific costs identified at that stage and will be considered alongside other capital programme priorities during the budget process. No specific financial resources are required to adopt the strategy nor are any requested at this stage.
- 4.2 Any financial implications must be considered in the light of the ongoing difficult financial circumstances facing this and all councils, exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's budget and the wider economy.

- 4.3 The Strategy will be delivered through clear actions identified in a Delivery Plan (underway). It is unlikely that the production and delivery of the actions can be met through existing resources. Any additional resources identified will be subject to usual governance procedures.

Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact

- 4.4 There is significant opportunity to transform all areas of the business, as identified in the Strategy Commitment 'We will transform how we work'. For HR, staff will need to be equipped with the skills, tools and support they need to deliver the commitments through every aspect of their work. Further resource implications identify the need for additional FTE's to be recruited to project manage this work, and the resources needed will be subject to usual governance procedures.
- 4.5 Our IT is a clear enabler and will require further investment in order to realise the flexible ways of working that deliver on the commitments. This investment is not identified as part of the Strategy and will be addressed through a separate route, subject to usual governance procedures.
- 4.6 County Council assets (both those identified in part through the Carbon Management Plan, and including land, highways and structures) will need to be assessed to understand how they, and prioritise which, can contribute to reducing our carbon emissions and adapted for climate change.

5. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications identified as a result of this proposal.

6. Risk Implications and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Financial stress affecting WSCC may result in deferral of sustainable investment decisions	Clear benefits of early and timely investment, and savings realised as a result, to be identified for all projects. Full life-cycle costings to be considered.
Focus on economic / social recovery from Covid-19 may deprioritise environmental considerations, slowing response to emergency	Strategic and operational recovery to fully embed environmental and climate change considerations, to secure long-term benefits. Local Nature Partnership influencing the economic recovery strategy.
Insufficient resident and business buy-in to level of personal change required to have impact	Strategy focusses on the actions the County Council can take, rather than relying on the actions of others. Climate Change Advisory Group members will influence county groups
Insufficient buy-in governance, championing and constructive challenge within the organisation to progress the objectives of this strategy	Climate Change Board to be set up, chaired by the Executive Director, Place. Cross-organisation consultation has resulted in officer support for the Strategy.

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Proceeding with this timeline reduces the ability of public to have their view and may open us up to legal challenge	Risk considered by Director for Environment and Public Protection and Cabinet Member for the Environment to be low. Informal engagement with local partners and with elected Members planned. Public consultation to be considered once strategy adopted, to influence delivery plan.

7. Other Options Considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 7.1 Producing only a carbon management strategy. This was not considered as it would miss out on the wider and longer-term benefits of an adapted and resilient organisation, making better use of our natural resources, supporting the local green economy and transforming our organisation.
- 7.2 Producing a strategy focussed solely on the natural environment. This was initially considered, but taking into account feedback from officers and CCAG, the focus was amended to be climate change. This has a wider policy reach and can be applied to all aspects of Council work.
- 7.3 Refreshing the previous sustainability strategy. This was initially considered but was discounted as, while the ambitions were still relevant, the scope needed to be wider and more ambitious.
- 7.4 Not doing anything. This was not considered acceptable to members, officers or communities.

8. Equality and Human Rights Assessment

This has been considered and has influenced engagement with local partners and members.

9. Social Value and Sustainability Assessment

The adoption and delivery of the Climate Change Strategy will have multiple sustainability benefits. Many of these are explored in more detail above, but in summary it will contribute to:

- Increased health and well-being
- Improved air quality
- A protected natural environment and supported biodiversity
- A greater and greener local economy
- Reduced bills and
- Energy security

10. Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

None identified.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Climate Change Strategy

Appendix B: Feedback from engagement with partner organisations and elected members.

Background papers

None